

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL FEEDBACK REPORT

in response to the *Systems Portfolio* of

NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

March 10, 2008



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Program**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

The following are summary comments on each of the AQIP Categories crafted by the Appraisal Team to highlight **Northern Wyoming Community College District's** achievements and to identify challenges yet to be met.

The opinion of the portfolio review team is that NWCCD has a solid understanding of the concept of building and maintaining a culture of continuous quality improvement (CQI), and that the institution exhibits many strengths (c.f. "S" statements) in demonstrating that understanding. Because the institution is in the early stages of implementing a CQI culture, many processes are in place, but few data are available for analysis. With this mutual understanding between the College and the review team concerning level of progress toward embracing an AQIP culture, it should not surprise college leadership that the team has articulated many opportunities for improvement (c.f. O statements). These are not intended as criticisms, and should not be read as "zeros." They are opportunities that, if pursued, can lead the College to new levels of excellence in serving all their various stakeholders.

The review team has collectively reviewed 26 portfolios, and comment was made to the effect that NWCCD's portfolio is among the better ones we have seen. It is apparent that the College leadership knows what they need to do and that they "get" Academic Quality Improvement. The encouragement of the review team is for the College to take the next step in measuring the success of their many processes by collecting, analyzing and using data to drive mission-relevant decision making. This, in turn, can lead to new strategic initiatives that can ensure rapid progress toward fully implementing the desired CQI culture.

The team also recognizes the College's inability to tackle all opportunities for improvement at once. The advice of the team is to prioritize these opportunities and to address them strategically as best furthers the College's mission. For example, in response to portfolio sections 1R4 and 1I1, the team identified as an outstanding opportunity (OO), "An increased emphasis on the implementation of existing initiatives, as opposed to making considerable efforts to identify shortcomings, would help to both further develop these existing initiatives and to identify additional improvement projects" (see page 18).

1. NWCCD has a demonstrated commitment to a strong faculty-developed general education core and a college-wide assessment program. Identification of learning

outcomes and measurement of those outcomes are incorporated into its culture and practice. However, the College has yet to fully utilize these assets as it pursues its quality improvement efforts. The limited use of benchmark data restricts the evaluation of its success. Results are limited in their value with little or no trend data. Benchmark data are essential in both determining how well NWCCD's existing initiatives are performing and in identifying additional improvement projects.

2. "Other Distinctive Objectives" provides core purposes of the College that go beyond teaching and learning. NWCCD has identified important aspects of responding to community cultural and workforce needs, along with student intercollegiate activities and connections to help students learn. The College has the opportunity to more clearly determine how the other distinctive objectives relate to the mission, define goals of these important objectives, and develop initiatives in its planning process. Responses to the needs of targeted businesses, community and students may be stronger than the Systems Portfolio reflects. A clear consensus of what to measure is needed so that the value that activities provide to both the community and the College can be demonstrated.

3. NWCCD has paid particular attention to students and other stakeholders and to developing processes that engage them as a part of their pursuit of quality. The College is actively involved in working with community and business stakeholders. The results have been anecdotal, with limited direct data to help the College understand how to continue to improve on this asset. Understanding students is generic, and could be improved with more specificity around unique needs of students and new market segments.

4. There is much evidence that NWCCD genuinely values its people. Through comparing best practices and reviewing pertinent research, NWCCD may identify means of becoming more strategic in developing processes and procedures that are proven to help internal stakeholders feel valued. A possible result of such research could be a shift of available funds (even conservation of funds) toward optimizing internal stakeholder satisfaction. The newly created Personnel Committee provides a

mechanism for addressing specific policies and processes that will support improvement in this area.

5. "Leading and communicating" focuses the institution on creating change through the use of feedback from data that reflects the current status of the institutional operations. NWCCD has the opportunity to strengthen the role of its leadership through more clearly defined processes for making decisions, promoting excellence, and reviewing performance. Developing a formal succession plan at the top-most level is critical to facilitate transitions and maintain momentum in the continuous improvement initiatives. Identifying measurements that provide results is important in improving processes and systems for leading and communicating. The Governance project results provide a strong set of recommendations for implementing improvements in Leading and Communicating.

6. NWCCD is currently developing its institutional processes. Therefore some of the processes described are too new to determine the effectiveness for improving programs or services. In order to assure that processes are effective, objectives and targets need to be derived from NWCCD's mission. The College is just beginning to identify data used in making decisions and allocating resources. The future goals of improvement might focus on formal systems to monitor student and stakeholder expectations for services, comparing them to actual results, so that NWCCD can implement changes to increase stakeholder satisfaction with the College experience.

7. NWCCD is in the beginning stages of designing processes for measuring the effectiveness of how they collect, analyze, and use information to drive the improvement process. The institution is aware of the advantages of using data, setting targets, and measuring results for these purposes. The excellent progress that has been made in the Records and Registration areas can now be expanded to other areas of the institution.

8. NWCCD's pressure to create the systems portfolio early in the AQIP process is particularly evident when it comes to "planning continuous improvement." However, significant attempts have been made to use action projects and institutional planning to promote continuous quality improvement. Continuing to align planning and improvement efforts with the mission statement is essential in the quality journey. Since continuous

improvement is dependent on employees understanding of process improvement and systems thinking, employee training and development in these areas (beyond the typical types of development such as conferences and workshops) is important. NWCCD's leadership should be encouraged that improvement efforts will prove effective, if a commitment to a culture of improvement is broadly embraced by stakeholders.

9. Building and maintaining collaborative relationships is an area of general strength for NWCCD. This is documented throughout the portfolio in references to the increased state investment and community involvement in the College. The College has demonstrated impressive success in community partner development that has paid off in its fund-raising efforts and has begun to establish indicators of improvement in this category. However, these processes could be more formal and systematic. The College is encouraged to capitalize on its current strengths to find ways that may bring new and better mutual benefits to NWCCD and its partners.

Accreditation issues and Strategic challenges for **Northern Wyoming Community College District** are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

ELEMENTS OF Northern Wyoming Community College District's FEEDBACK REPORT

The *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* provides AQIP's official response to your *Systems Portfolio* by a team of readers trained in evaluation. After appraisers independently reviewed your document, the team reached consensus on essential elements of your institutional profile, strengths and opportunities for improvement by Category, and significant issues for your institution. These are presented in three sections of the Feedback Report: Accreditation Issues Analysis, Critical Characteristics Analysis, and Category Feedback. These components are interrelated in defining context, evaluating performance, surfacing critical issues, and assessing institutional performance.

It is important to remember that the Systems Appraisal Team had only your *Systems Portfolio* to guide their analysis of your institution's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Consequently, their report may omit important strengths — if you were too modest to stress

them in your *Systems Portfolio*, or if your discussion and documentation of them was unconvincing. Similarly, the team may have pointed out areas of potential improvement that are already receiving the institution's attention. Again, the team used its best judgment in identifying improvement opportunities. If some of these areas of potential improvement are now strengths rather than opportunities because of your own focused efforts, that is all to your credit. If the team was unsure about an area, we urged it to err on the side of giving your institution the best possible advice about where investing your efforts might pay off. If some of their advice comes after the fact, after you've already tackled an area, no harm is done.

Executive Summary. Summative statements agreed upon by the Systems Appraisal Team based upon the institution's achievements and challenges in regards to each of the nine AQIP Categories. Strategic challenges for the institution are listed in detail within the Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis section of the Appraisal Feedback Report.

Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis: Strategic issues are those most closely related to your institution's ability to succeed in reaching its mission, planning, and quality improvement goals. Accreditation issues are areas where you have not yet provided evidence that you meet the Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*, or where the evidence you have presented suggests you may have difficulties, now or in the future, in meeting these expectations. If accreditation is essential for your institution then any accreditation issues identified are, by definition, also strategic. The Systems Appraisal Team identified both of these kinds of issues through analysis of your Organizational Overview and the feedback it provided for each Category, as well as by reviewing the Index to the *Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided along with your *Systems Portfolio*. This list of strategic issues offers a framework for addressing ongoing improvement of processes and systems, serving as an executive summary of the Report's key findings and recommendations.

Critical Characteristics: Your Systems Portfolio's Organizational Overview provides context for the team's knowledge of your institution's identity, mission objectives, strategic goals, and key factors related to improvement. Critical Characteristics are those features most important for understanding the institution's mission, environment, stakeholders, competitive position, goals, and processes. Characteristics having the greatest relevance to each Category are identified in the Report.

Category Feedback: The Report's feedback on each of AQIP's nine Categories specifically identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement. An **S** or **SS** identifies strengths, with the double letter signifying important achievements or capabilities upon which to build. Opportunities are designated by **O**, with **OO** indicating areas where attention may result in more significant improvement. Comments, which are keyed to your *Systems Portfolio*, offer brief analysis of each strength and opportunity. Organized by Category, and presenting the team's findings in detail, this section is the heart of the Report. At the end of the list of strengths and opportunities for each Category is the team's consensus assessment of the institution's stage of development on that particular Category. This section consists of a series of statements reflecting the reviewers' assessment of the institution's current status in relation to critical quality characteristics: robustness of process design; utilization or deployment of processes; the existence of results, trends, and comparative data; the use of results data as feedback, and systematic processes for improvement of the activities that the Category covers. Since institutions are complex, maturity levels may vary from one Category to another.

STRATEGIC AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

In conducting the Systems Appraisal, the team attempted to identify the broader issues that present the greatest challenges and opportunities for your institution in the coming years. These are all strategic issues, ones you need to grapple with as you identify your institution's strategies for confronting the future and becoming the institution you want to be. The team also examined whether any of these strategic issues put your institution into jeopardy of not meeting the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation expectations.

Issues Affecting Compliance with the *Criteria for Accreditation*. An important goal for the Systems Appraisal was to review your institution's compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's *Criteria for Accreditation*. The peer quality experts who served on the team were all trained in evaluating colleges and universities using the Commission's *Criteria*, and the Systems Appraisal process they followed included careful steps to ensure the team used the *Criteria* as a major factor in their review. As the team reviewed your presentation of your institutions under each AQIP Category, it searched for accreditation-related issues and concerns. In addition, the team used the *Index to the Criteria for Accreditation* that you provided

with your Portfolio to perform a comprehensive review of the *Criteria* and each Core Component to ascertain whether you presented compelling evidence that your institution complies with each of these Commission expectations.

The Systems Appraisal team concluded that Northern Wyoming Community College District has presented evidence that it complies with each of the Five *Criteria for Accreditation* and each of their Core Components. Although the Systems Appraisal does not in itself constitute a review for continued accreditation, the team's conclusion upon reviewing your Portfolio against the Criteria will serve as a telling piece of evidence during the Commission's next scheduled AQIP review of your institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Issues Affecting Future Institutional Strategies. The Systems Appraisal Team identified the following strategic issues to assist Northern Wyoming Community College District in prioritizing and taking action on the important broad challenges and opportunities it faces. From these you may discover your vital immediate priorities, shaping strategies that can lead to a quantum leap in the performance of your institution. Implementing these strategies may call for specific actions, so AQIP's expectation that your institution be engaged in three or four vital Action Projects at all times will help encourage your administrators, faculty, and staff to turn these strategic goals into real accomplishments. Knowing that Northern Wyoming Community College District will discuss these strategic issues, give priority to those it concludes are most critical, and take action promptly, the Systems Appraisal Team identified:

NWCCD has demonstrated particular strengths in the area of establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships. Capitalizing on these strengths by determining measures of success in building and maintaining relationships can serve to further strengthen existing relationships, while identifying new key relationships that could be beneficial to the College and its stakeholders.

Now that many quality processes are in place, the identification of measures for all procedures, the gathering and analysis of data, and the use of results for decision-making will close the loop on an ongoing cycle of continuous quality improvement.

As the College works to close the CQI loop in all areas, it will be important to ensure universal mission alignment by targeting results, for all processes, that are mission-relevant, and by re-examining mission relevance on a regular basis.

Because predicting specific succession strategies for senior leadership could be challenging, a plan that ensures continuity of operations is as important for the District as is a board and executive leadership succession plan. A well devised continuity of operations plan could preserve the existing quality improvement momentum, and guard against major interruptions to widely-embraced institutional direction, irrespective of leadership changes.

Despite the uniqueness of NWCCD's circumstances, relative to most other colleges, peer HLC (and AQIP) institutions and districts do exist in other states that serve geographically wide-spread, predominately rural, historically single industry, changing economy regions, through consolidated or multiple campus models. Benchmarking against such institutions in all areas of operations, but especially for best practices in teaching and learning, could be an invaluable source of quality improvement ideas and opportunities for the College.

USING THE FEEDBACK REPORT

The AQIP *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* is intended to initiate action for improvement. It is therefore important that the Report produced by the Systems Appraisal Team stimulate review of organizational processes and systems. Though decisions about specific actions are each institution's, AQIP expects every institution to use its feedback to stimulate cycles of continual improvement. At the next Strategy Forum an AQIP institution attends, its peers will examine in detail how it is using the feedback from its Systems Appraisal.

An organization needs to examine its Report strategically to identify those areas that will yield greatest benefit if addressed. Some key questions that may arise in careful examination of the Report may be: How do the team's findings challenge our assumptions about ourselves? Given our mission and goals, which issues should we focus on? How will we employ results to innovate, grow, and encourage a positive culture of improvement? How will we incorporate lessons learned from this review in our planning and operational processes? How will we revise the *Systems Portfolio* to reflect what we have learned?

How an organization interprets, communicates, and uses its feedback for improvement ought to support AQIP's core values, encouraging involvement, learning, collaboration and integrity. Based solely upon an organization's *Systems Portfolio*, the Report reflects a disciplined,

external review of what an organization says about itself. The report should help an organization identify ways to improve its *Systems Portfolio* so it functions better to communicate accurately to internal and external audiences. But the Report's chief purpose is to help you to identify areas for improvement, and to act so that these areas actually improve. These improvements can then be incorporated into an updated *Systems Portfolio*, guaranteeing that future Systems Appraisals will reflect the progress an institution has made.

Within a year following the Systems Appraisal, an institution participates in another AQIP Strategy Forum, where the focus will be on what the institution has learned from its Appraisal (and from its other methods of identifying and prioritizing improvement opportunities, and what it has concluded are its major strategic priorities for the next few years. AQIP's goal is to help an institution to clarify the strategic issues most vital to its success, and then to support the institution as it addresses these priorities through Action Projects that will make a difference in institutional performance.

CRITICAL CHARACTERISTICS ANALYSIS

The purpose of this section is to identify what team members understood to be the critical and distinguishing characteristics of your institution. They are the shared understanding of the most important aspects of Northern Wyoming Community College District, its current dynamics and the forces surrounding it, and its internal momentum and aspirations, at least as team members understood them. This section also demonstrates that the Systems Appraisal Team recognized and knew what makes Northern Wyoming Community College District distinctive. Should you find some characteristics that you think are critical and missing from this list, you may want to clarify and highlight these items when you revise your *Systems Portfolio* and other literature explaining your institution to the public.

Item Critical Characteristic

Distinctive institutional features

- O1a NWCCD is the local provider of higher education for all of Northeast Wyoming, serving an 11,000 square mile region (comprising three counties) from two campuses (separated by 100 miles) and a centrally located outreach center.

- O1b The College reflects the cultural differences between the two primary communities it serves. Sheridan College is highly respected for its arts and music programs which augment the community's cultural programs. The Gillette College campus serves a key role in the area because of its industry-related technical programs and its ITEC, funded by the US Department of Labor.
- O1c Both campuses are impacted by the recent population and economic growth in the region and state. New facilities are presently needed in both locations and future expansion is anticipated at the Buffalo Outreach Center. The extremely low (3%) unemployment in the region provides opportunity for workforce training, but employment opportunities compete with the College for traditional enrollment students.
- O1d The "One-College" Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP Action Projects.
- O1e As NWCCD enters the portfolio phase of the AQIP process, the organization sees itself at the very beginning of a transition to a continuous quality organization, and is managing rapid sweeping change. As a result, the present focus is on setting up new systems to organize work, involve people meaningfully, and make planning and improvement natural parts of your culture.

Scope of educational offerings

- O2a NWCCD offers 48 associate level programs (23 AA & AS, 23 AAS, 2 AFA) and 15 certificates. Non-degree Personal/Professional Development (PD) offerings constitute a high growth area, accounting for 15% of Fall 2006 enrollment.
- O2b Most programming is offered in technology-enhanced classrooms on campus, but alternative delivery methods (including the Buffalo Outreach Center, online courses, compressed video and specific employer targeted programming) are expanding for non-traditional, time and place bound, students and stakeholders.

O2c NWCCD has partnerships with the University of Wyoming and six other institutions for baccalaureate degree completion on its campuses through a combination of online and onsite offerings.

Student base

O3a 88% of NWCCD students (head count) are from Wyoming. 46% are male, 94% are white, average age is 27, average student load is 8 credits, 34% intend to be baccalaureate bound transfer students, and 17% are occupational/technical students. The remainder of the enrollment comes from professional and personal development, and concurrent enrollment.

O3b Both FTE and annualized headcount have grown over the past five years, with notable percentage increases among men and part time students. The percent of enrollments in academic transfer programs has been declining, while the enrollments in health and technical programs have increased over the same five-year period.

O3c NWCCD offers a growing “living-learning” residential program, with on-campus housing for 410 students projected for the Sheridan campus by 2008/09, and 100 beds for students on the Gillette campus by Fall 2009.

Key relationships

O4a NWCCD has numerous collaborative relationships with local, state, and national entities designed to provide stakeholders with appropriate services and opportunities.

Faculty and staff base

O5a NWCCD employs 245 full-time personnel, of which 72 (33%) are faculty, and 135 part-time personnel, 74 (55%) of these being faculty; resulting in a student to faculty ratio of 18:1.

O5b Among the faculty members, 12% hold doctorate degrees and 67% hold masters degrees.

O5c NWCCD is not unionized. Employees participate in college governance through the Faculty Senate, Classified Staff Association, and Administrative Staff Association.

Facilities, equipment and regulatory environment

- O6a The Sheridan College campus has 27 buildings on 21 acres while the Gillette College campus has one large recently constructed building on 15 acres, and additional leased space.
- O6b Both campuses have staffed library facilities.
- O6c The institution has been continuously accredited by the North Central Association since 1968 and joined AQIP in 2005. Nursing, Massage Therapy, and Dental programs carry additional professional accreditations.
- O6d Students and staff have access to a suite of technology services know as e-Services which includes basic web access, email, electronic database access, and a full student services array, including advising, registration, payment, requesting transcripts, receiving grades, online library database access, and help desk.

Competitive environment

- O7a Despite being the only college in its three county service area, NWCCD faces considerable competition for students because almost a third of the area high school graduates matriculate directly into baccalaureate degree granting institutions, including the University of Wyoming (with an office on campus), University of Phoenix, and University of Mary (Bismarck, ND). Many high school graduates immediately enter the region's highly competitive work force.
- O7b Although NWCCD is the favored workforce development provider by local business and industry, competition includes local training companies and employers' sending people out of state for training.

Key opportunities and vulnerabilities

- O8a Because of the region's population and economic growth, NWCCD has strong community and Legislative support, as evidenced by the funding of new construction on campus and a significant salary increase for all employees.
- O8b The service region is thinly populated and critical mass is always a challenge for academic offerings needed by the region. A key to the community's and the NWCCD's success is the ability to attract students from outside the state to meet the needs for employment and new business growth.

O8c Increased national focus on reducing carbon emissions may put the region's major industry, coal, and its coal bed natural gas-based economy at risk. There is a need and opportunity to partner with area industry to create an R and D infrastructure for clean coal technologies, including carbon sequestration and coal gasification to maintain this energy source into the future.

CATEGORY FEEDBACK

In the following sections, each of which deals with strengths and opportunities for improvement for one of the nine AQIP Categories, selected *Critical Characteristics* are again highlighted, those the Systems Appraisal Team believed were critical keys to reviewing that particular AQIP Category. The symbols used in these "strengths and opportunities" sections for each Category stand for *outstanding strength* (SS), *strength* (S), *opportunity for improvement* (O) and *pressing or outstanding opportunity for improvement* (OO). The choice of symbol for each item represents the consensus evaluation of the Systems Appraisal Team members, and deserves your thoughtful consideration. Comments marked SS or OO may need immediate attention, either to ensure the institution preserves and maximizes the value of its greatest strengths, or to devote immediate attention to its greatest opportunities for improvement.

AQIP CATEGORY 1: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Helping Students Learn identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This Category focuses on the teaching-learning process within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how your entire institution contributes to helping students learn and overall student development. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to learning objectives, mission-driven student learning and development, intellectual climate, academic programs and courses, student preparation, key issues such as technology and diversity, program and course delivery, faculty and staff roles, teaching and learning effectiveness, course sequencing and scheduling, learning and co-curricular support, student assessment, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 1, Helping Students Learn:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d The “One-College” Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP Action Projects.
- O1e As NWCCD enters the portfolio phase of the AQIP process, the organization sees itself at the very beginning of a transition to a continuous quality organization, and is managing rapid sweeping change. As a result, the present focus is on setting up new systems to organize work, involve people meaningfully, and make planning and improvement natural parts of your culture.
- O2a NWCCD offers 48 associate level programs (23 AA & AS, 23 AAS, 2 AFA) and 15 certificates. Non-degree Personal/Professional Development (PD) offerings constitute a high growth area, accounting for 15% of Fall 2006 enrollment.
- O2b Most programming is offered in technology-enhanced classrooms on campus, but alternative delivery methods (including the Buffalo Outreach Center, online courses, compressed video and specific employer targeted programming) are expanding for non-traditional, time and place bound, students and stakeholders.
- O2c NWCCD has partnerships with the University of Wyoming and six other institutions for baccalaureate degree completion on its campuses through a combination of online and onsite offerings.
- O6d Students and staff have access to a suite of technology services know as e-Services which includes basic web access, email, electronic database access, and a full student services array, including advising, registration, payment, requesting transcripts, receiving grades, online library database access, and help desk.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 1, Helping Students Learn.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1P1a	S	In every program, NWCCD students benefit from a strong faculty-developed general education core and a related college-wide assessment program that ensures growth in nine critical areas of life, learning, and civic responsibility. Data from this assessment program can explicitly illustrate mission fulfillment to stakeholders.
1P1b	O	NWCCD identifies an opportunity for itself to rejuvenate a once-strong learning assessment program. Reactivating the assessment committees for the nine core areas of learning, or establishing a similar assessment oversight mechanism may be a means to ensure ongoing quality improvement in student learning.
1P1c	S	External requirements for student learning outcomes reflect stakeholder expectations from articulation partners, state and national accreditation, and advisory committees. It may be useful to integrate these requirements as NWCCD continues its quality discussions.
1P1d	O	While general education learning outcomes have been established collectively, learning objectives for individual courses are set by faculty teaching individual courses. Faculty may lose sight of overall program outcomes due to their focus on course objectives.
1P2	O	While NWCCD uses broad collaborative processes to develop new programs, courses and course delivery methods, the College would benefit from more systematically developing the process so that there is a clear link between emerging market needs and the College mission.
1P3	S	A process is in place that defines and communicates general education course placement requirements across transfer and ITEC courses.
1P4	O	Since student and faculty survey results indicate that a "significant proportion of students do not understand [college] expectations,"

NWCCD's idea about requiring an orientation course that combines topics covered in *College Studies* and *Personal and Career Development* is worth pursuing. Implementation of additional methods of communicating expectations, as may be determined through comparing best practices from other colleges, could pay off in improving student satisfaction and, perhaps, enrollment.

- 1P5a S There is a Learning Center in Gillette and Sheridan to help students who need extra help in classes. Students can take either College Studies or Personal and Career Development to assist them in identifying their needs, interests, and abilities related to their academic and professional interests. Students who demonstrate a need for developmental assistance are referred to the campus learning center.
- 1P5b O Although there are numerous documented opportunities for students to receive advising and placement testing, an integration of these activities would further help students achieve their academic goals.
- 1P6 S NWCCD employs a public and robust system of documenting effective teaching and learning, using measures such as certification/licensure, grade point average, and the annual assessment report.
- 1P7a S The use of state of the art technology in the classroom, and WebCT enhanced learning for 85% of campus-based courses demonstrates a high level of responsiveness to the needs of learners. The use of video conferencing between the two campuses is an innovative means of optimizing faculty efficiency for low enrollment courses.
- 1P7b S Faculty must complete formal instruction in online delivery or have a history of teaching online at the College level prior to being approved to teach online courses.
- 1P7c O The development of a formal process for the determination of course delivery method would provide the institution and faculty with guidance, consistency across disciplines, and an explicit assurance of a balance of student and institutional needs.

- 1P8a S NWCCD uses a number of strategies to evaluate curriculum and programs. Advisory boards play a significant role in career and technical programs. The College also uses statewide articulation meetings and results of certification and licensure to evaluate curriculum.
- 1P8b O The establishment of clear and comprehensive (college-wide) processes for evaluating programs, curriculum, and the effectiveness and efficiency of course delivery, based upon measurable research-based outcomes, could drive continuous improvement for these critical instructional areas.
- 1P9a O The College is participating for the first time in the CCSSE and is required to do so by the Wyoming Community College Commission every two years. The College recognizes the opportunity to collect data, and the challenge of making it meaningful to assist in decision making.
- 1P9b S The College participated in the Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year and the results were used to demonstrate areas of needed improvement in serving students and to identify improvement projects to address problem areas.
- 1P9c S Through the identification of the need for one-stop student services and the provision of a professional library staff at both campuses, NWCCD has made solid progress toward meeting student and faculty needs.
- 1P10a S The development of the Co-curricular Transcript for Leadership and Involvement, provides students with a clear means to track and quantify how their co-curricular involvement helps them progress in their achievement of the College's core areas of learning.
- 1P10b O While the College provides numerous opportunities to gain experience related to their curricular learning objectives, it is not clear how the goals are aligned. Providing a chart to indicate alignment would be helpful in communicating how goals and learning objectives coincide and align with the College mission.
- 1P11 O "Closing the loop" on assessing student learning, and using assessment data to drive curricular and instructional decisions remains a challenge for

many institutions of higher learning, and faculty across the nation require assistance in devising effective assessment measures for student learning. NWCCD could well serve both faculty and students by providing specific professional development opportunities that focus upon strategies for developing, and using the results from, effective assessment measures.

- 1P12 S NWCCD is using a variety of formal and informal means of determining student preparedness for further education or employment. These methods should provide valuable data for planning continuous improvement of programs throughout the District.
- 1P13 O The assessment and selection of performance measures are not even across the campuses and programs. Although several of the programs are making new efforts to gather data related to student performance, NWCCD acknowledges that it has more work to do in “closing the loop.”
- 1R1 O When the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement program is fully operational, it will be important to establish specific currently achievable, and incrementally advancing, indicators of student success for all 9 of the core areas of learning, in order to demonstrate ever-growing student success in all areas of learning.
- 1R3 OO No results are shown indicating how the effectiveness of unique teaching methods, faculty excellence, or technology benefits support the learning successes of students at the College.
- 1R4,111 OO An increased emphasis on the implementation of existing initiatives, as opposed to making considerable efforts to identify shortcomings, would help to both further develop these existing initiatives and to identify additional improvement projects.
- 1I2 O Although the College recognizes the need to set targets and to consistently communicate the results and improvement priorities through a variety of methods, no specific targets for improvement are identified within the teaching and learning context of this criterion. The development

of benchmark data would provide NWCCD with both a baseline to measure progress in reaching targets as well as guidance in the setting of specific targets and priorities.

AQIP CATEGORY 2: ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of your institution's major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of your mission. Depending on your institution's character, it examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of other distinctive objectives, alignment of other distinctive objectives, faculty and staff roles, assessment and review of objectives, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The College reflects the cultural differences between the two primary communities it serves. Sheridan College is highly respected for its arts and music programs which augment the community's cultural programs. The Gillette College campus serves a key role in the area because of its industry-related technical programs and its ITEC, funded by the US Department of Labor.
- O1c Both campuses are impacted by the recent population and economic growth in the region and state. New facilities are presently needed in both locations and future expansion is anticipated at the Buffalo Outreach Center. The extremely low (3%) unemployment in the region provides opportunity for workforce training, but employment opportunities compete with the College for traditional enrollment students.
- O4a NWCCD has numerous collaborative relationships with local, state, and national entities designed to provide stakeholders with appropriate services and opportunities.

O7b Although, NWCCD is the favored workforce development provider by local business and industry, competition includes local training companies and employers' sending people out of state for training.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
2P1a	S	NWCCD has a well defined and ambitious set of other distinctive objectives, and involves a broad cross section of stakeholders in determining those objectives. Major distinctive objectives and initiatives are discussed at all organizational levels. Strategies and plans emerge from a collaborative process involving the entire College community.
2P1b	O	Specific processes to review and update the objectives should ensure that the other distinctive objectives are related and support NWCCD's mission.
2P2	O	Determining expectations for the other distinctive objectives and linking them to institutional priorities will allow NWCCD to measure improvement, allocate resources, and/or create new programs using specific outcomes or goals to guide the activities.
2P3	S	Faculty, students, administration and the community all have input into determining needs and allocating resources to community-based initiatives. Faculty and staff work directly with their supervisors to communicate their needs, and have an opportunity to participate in all planning processes, including those with budgetary linkages.
2P4	O	NWCCD acknowledges the need to develop sufficient processes for review and improvement of objectives related to accomplishing other distinctive objectives. NWCCD is in the early stages of gathering post activity information that will contribute to improving future activities. NWCCD also recognizes the opportunity to move responsibly for

assessing other distinctive objectives from the department-only level to an institutional level, in order to develop clear measures that support institutional planning and selection of strategies that will best achieve the NWCCD vision.

- 2P5a S The co-curricular transcript, although in its infancy, is an innovative method of documenting student engagement in activities that support the learning goals of the institution, and provides a tracking or assessment measure for the College.
- 2P5b O As the College progresses toward becoming a quality improvement-driven institution, it will be important to develop standard procedures for collecting and analyzing measures of accomplishing other distinctive objectives. Benchmarking against other institutions may help to see the impact on student learning.
- 2R1 O The College has an opportunity through the co-curricular transcript to systematically track student participation.
- 2R2 O When results are systematically collected, there is an opportunity to compare with benchmark institutions for making change and improvements. An opportunity exists to identify a cluster of colleges in Wyoming and other states with whom comparisons of accomplishing other distinctive objectives can be made. NWCCD may find assistance in identifying such peer institutions through the Higher Learning Commission.
- 2I1 O The College recognizes the need to collect data to improve systems and processes and has identified several ways to do so. NWCCD should benefit from analyzing its data and setting targets to achieve.

AQIP CATEGORY 3: UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS

Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs examines how your institution works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines your institution's

processes and systems related to student and stakeholder identification, student and stakeholder requirements, analysis of student and stakeholder needs, relationship building with students and stakeholders, complaint collection, analysis, and resolution, determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1b The College reflects the cultural differences between the two primary communities it serves. Sheridan College is highly respected for its arts and music programs which augment the community's cultural programs. The Gillette College campus serves a key role in the area because of its industry-related technical programs and its ITEC, funded by the US Department of Labor.
- O3a 88% of NWCCD students (head count) are from Wyoming. 46% are male, 94% are white, average age is 27, average student load is 8 credits, 34% intend to be baccalaureate bound transfer students, and 17% are occupational/technical students. The remainder of the enrollment comes from professional and personal development, and concurrent enrollment.
- O3b Both FTE and annualized headcount have grown over the past five years, with notable percentage increases among men and part time students. The percent of enrollments in academic transfer programs has been declining, while the enrollments in health and technical programs have increased over the same five-year period.
- O7b Although, NWCCD is the favored workforce development provider by local business and industry, competition includes local training companies and employers' sending people out of state for training.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating

to processes encompassed by Category 3, Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
3P1	O	The College has identified multiple sources of information related to student needs. An opportunity exists to develop a more systematic process for data collection and analysis that could better inform decisions about meeting needs for a growing population of workforce development and continuing education students. Employer feedback, for example, could be a valuable source of information contributing to such a process.
3P2	O	While NWCCD is actively engaged in processes to develop and maintain relationships with prospective and enrolled students, a systematic best practice, and research-based process for determining the effectiveness of relationship-building activities could facilitate improved student relationships.
3P3, 3P4	S	There is documentation of multiple methods for identifying stakeholder needs, and many efforts are made to establish relationships and strong communications among the community, local businesses, and the College.
3P5a	S	In determining feasibility of new offerings, NWCCD considers student demand, institutional capacity and expertise, and regional need, before engaging in the formal process for new course or program approval.
3P5b	O	Table 3P5.1 outlines the resources that could provide information about future student needs. The development of a more formal process of data analysis, and the involvement of students in new program delivery design and identification of new student services needs could help the College better anticipate the future needs of students and other stakeholder groups.
3P6, 3P7a	S	NWCCD collects complaints and determines stakeholder satisfaction through a combination of personal contact, satisfactions surveys,

- evaluations and focus groups. Problems are resolved at the level closest to the stakeholders whenever possible.
- 3P6, 3P7b O NWCCD could benefit from developing a master timeline of formative and summative assessment activities related to student and stakeholder satisfaction with the overall NWCCD experience. A process of systematic analysis of the data generated from such assessments would be helpful in closing the quality improvement loop and in deciding and communicating appropriate courses of action.
- 3R1 O In comparing overall satisfaction by transfer students from 2002 to 2004 (table 3R1.1), approximately 19% more rated overall experience as excellent in 2004. However, the combined excellent/good rating decreased slightly from 2002 to 2004 and the number of students rating their overall experience as “very poor” increased by 10%. An opportunity exists to analyze these data more thoroughly for statistical significance in order to better understand and address these changes in student experience.
- 3I1, 3I2 O Although NWCCD has set planning goals for itself related to students and other stakeholders, the goals are not linked to data. While it is appropriate to have any planning goals that the institution wishes, improvement plans are most useful if they are linked to the processes used, and the results obtained.

AQIP CATEGORY 4: VALUING PEOPLE

Valuing People explores your institution’s commitment to the development of your employees since the efforts of all of your faculty, staff, and administrators are required for institutional success. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training and development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation

factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 4, Valuing People:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d The “One-College” Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP action projects.
- O5a NWCCD employs 245 full-time personnel, of which 72 (33%) are faculty, and 135 part-time personnel, 74 (55%) of these being faculty; resulting in a student to faculty ratio of 18:1.
- O5b Among the faculty members, 12% hold doctorate degrees and 67% hold masters degrees.
- O5c NWCCD is not unionized. Employees participate in college governance through the Faculty Senate, Classified Staff Association, and Administrative Staff Association.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 4, Valuing People.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
4P1	O	The administrative process of job skills identification could be improved through a more centralized review of position descriptions that is coordinated by an institutional standard through HR and that formally involves input from industry or peer education institutions.

- | | | |
|----------|----|--|
| 4P2a | S | Standardization of the hiring process through the development of the online applicant tracking system and the hiring handbook are steps that reflect the quality improvement culture of the College. |
| 4P2b | SS | NWCCD strategies for improving employee retention through career pathways (job families), and salary increases, supported by legislative funding, position the College for continued competitiveness and speak strongly to the College's commitment to its employees. |
| 4P3 | O | Greater engagement of constituents in governance and increased communication between the two campuses could be achieved under the restructured District governance and through further implementation of technology. |
| 4P4 | S | Limited tuition waivers at NWCCD and University of Wyoming for eligible employees, plus sliding scale benefits and salary incentives to other employees for continuing college credit, are strategies to promote employee retention and lifelong learning in a geographically disbursed academic community. |
| 4P5 | O | While professional development requests can be initiated by the individual employee or a supervisor, a formal structure to identify institutional goals for professional development at the College could support institutional improvement. |
| 4P6, 4P7 | O | The faculty evaluation process has been articulated through the recent redesign and is a comprehensive process that has the potential to support goals for improved teaching and college operations. Additionally, the College is working toward linking merit pay with the performance review process. The data gained from this kind of 360° evaluation should inform employees how best to improve performance, while linking compensation to performance will provide strong incentive for pursuing identified improvement strategies. |
| 4P8 | O | Development of a campus-wide formal program, focusing on the motivation of employees, would afford the College increased opportunity |

both to identify motivational issues and to determine a consistent course of action.

- 4P9a S NWCCD provides a variety of health and safety services at no cost to employees, and release time for participation in related training. These investments can promote improved employee satisfaction.
- 4P9b O Using consistent employee satisfaction surveys across the District will allow NWCCD to identify trends where positive results have occurred from changes, and where improvement is needed.
- 4R1, 4R2 OO Limited results have been provided for valuing people. The College could benefit from establishing and using benchmark data from comparable institutions. Using the 2005 Examiner Survey provides an opportunity to implement change that targets specific areas of improvement while establishing additional benchmark data and institutional measures.
- 4R3, 4R4 O NWCCD comparisons to other higher education institutions seem to be limited to the area of compensation.
- 4I1, 4I2 OO NWCCD has yet to identify goals for improvement and continues to focus on process without targeted outcomes. Through the new Personnel Committee NWCCD has an opportunity to benchmark against other institutions, implement best practices, and improve through formal supervisor and leader training. This training will help managers to work with employees to tie their job duties to strategic initiatives.

AQIP CATEGORY 5: LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

Leading And Communicating addresses how your institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide your institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to leading activities, communicating activities, alignment of leadership system practices, institutional values and expectations, direction setting, future opportunity seeking, decision making, use of data, leadership

development and sharing, succession planning, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 5, Leading and Communicating:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d The “One-College” Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP action projects.
- O1e As NWCCD enters the portfolio phase of the AQIP process, the organization sees itself at the very beginning of a transition to a continuous quality organization, and is managing rapid sweeping change. As a result, the present focus is on setting up new systems to organize work, involve people meaningfully, and make planning and improvement natural parts of your culture.
- O4a NWCCD has numerous collaborative relationships with local, state, and national entities designed to provide stakeholders with appropriate services and opportunities.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District’s most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 5, Leading and Communicating.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
5P1	O	NWCCD does not appear to have a “process” that assures alignment of college actions with the mission, vision and values.
5P2	S	Creativity, innovation and problem solving have been a recent emphasis at NWCCD, suggesting that college leadership is consistently seeking future opportunities of service.

- 5P3 O Since decisions at the senior level are made by consensus, with approval by the President, and other decisions are based on recommendations from a committee or taskforce, an opportunity exists to clarify and communicate the decision-making process.
- 5P4 OO NWCCD openly acknowledges the opportunity to better identify and use information in decision making and as a resource for driving quality improvement. Implementing a concerted, structured process for gathering and using information will ensure informed and effective decisions.
- 5P5 S NWCCD employs a variety of formal and informal methods of vertical and horizontal communications within the organization. The governing board's practice of hosting monthly open meetings with published and emailed agenda is particularly indicative of a culture of transparency on the part of college leadership.
- 5P7 O While NWCCD provides training and personal development opportunities for employees, it is not clear from the description how leadership abilities are encouraged and developed. The Governance Project is an opportunity to formalize the process so that leaders are being developed at all levels.
- 5P8 O There is no formal plan in case of a vacancy at the top-most level. A well-considered and clearly articulated plan for both board and executive succession would assure continuity of institutional mission and vision into the future.
- 5P9 S Baseline measures of employee satisfaction were established prior to admission to AQIP, and can be used as a comparative measure for future review of employee satisfaction and potentially leadership performance.
- 5R1 O While an increased attendance at retreats and extensive community service are indicators of general satisfaction, there is an opportunity to develop specific effectiveness measures for leading and communicating.

- 5R2 O An opportunity exists to identify a cluster of colleges in Wyoming and other states with whom comparisons can be made. NWCCD may find assistance in identifying such peer institutions through the Higher Learning Commission.
- 5I1, 5I2 O Since there are no results available, it is difficult to identify strategies to improve current processes and systems. There is an opportunity to establish formal targets for improving leading and communicating.

AQIP CATEGORY 6: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

Supporting Institutional Operations addresses the variety of your institutional support processes that help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to student support, administrative support, identification of needs, contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives, day-to-day operations, use of data, measures, analysis of results, and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d The “One-College” Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP action projects.
- O3c NWCCD offers a growing “living-learning” residential program, with on-campus housing for 410 students projected for the Sheridan campus by 2008/09, and 100 beds for students on the Gillette campus by Fall 2009.
- O6b Both campuses have staffed library facilities.

O6d Students and staff have access to a suite of technology services know as e-Services which includes basic web access, email, electronic database access, and a full student services array, including advising, registration, payment, requesting transcripts, receiving grades, online library database access, and help desk.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 6, Supporting Institutional Operations.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
6P1a	S	NWCCD uses a variety of methods to identify student expectations. The CCSSE survey will provide a comparative cohort to use for tracking institutional improvement on targeted goals.
6P1b	O	NWCCD acknowledges a need for a formal process to assess the support service needs of its students. Knowing student expectations for customer service, delivery methods, and cost could inform goals for improvement within the service areas.
6P2a	O	Administering the College survey of employees to determine support service needs, as completed in earlier years, will provide the College with a consistent process to evaluate priorities.
6P2b	O	The institution would benefit from a more comprehensive look at the support needs across a greater variety of areas. Developing a systematic process for identifying needs of all stakeholder groups will assist in making decisions on how to allocate resources.
6P3	S	Processes to determine why students and employees leave the institution appear to be in place. Processes also exist for graduating students to evaluate their collegiate experience.
6P4, 6P5	O	NWCCD recognizes that much of the information collected to improve support services is informal. It may be important to build some standardized and consistent measures of effectiveness. There is an

- opportunity to formalize the processes, finding ways to use available data in order to improve services on a continual basis. Processes can be benchmarked or adopted from other businesses or colleges.
- 6R1, 6R2 S NWCCD has developed an aggressive plan for reaching and retaining the maximum financial reserves allowed under the new Wyoming law (8 percent versus previous 3 percent). The standardized higher education Key Financial Ratios allows the NWCCD to compare operational performance with other colleges from across the country.
- 6R1, 6R2 O NWCCD realizes there is an opportunity to develop more systematic methods of collecting data on a regular basis. There is a need to replace informal data gathering with formal methods and to develop a comparative data set. More formal data collection processes will provide results to be used in making improvement decisions.
- 6R3 O By having the seven Wyoming community colleges participating in the CCSSE, there is an opportunity to compile benchmark data to identify areas for improvement. A cluster of colleges in Wyoming and other states may be identified with whom comparisons can be made. NWCCD may find assistance in identifying such peer institutions through the Higher Learning Commission.
- 6I1, 6I2 O The College has the opportunity to use its culture of communication to drive increased alignment of leadership goals to operational actions. NWCCD may formalize its methods in order to collect data to be used to improve current processes, to set targets, and to communicate results and priorities to the appropriate stakeholders.

AQIP CATEGORY 7: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Measuring Effectiveness examines how your institution collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to collection, storage, management, and use of information and data – at the institutional and departmental/unit levels; institutional measures of effectiveness; information

and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its Systems Portfolio section covering Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1d The "One-College" Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP action projects.
- O1e As NWCCD enters the portfolio phase of the AQIP process, the organization sees itself at the very beginning of a transition to a continuous quality organization, and is managing rapid sweeping change. As a result, the present focus is on setting up new systems to organize work, involve people meaningfully, and make planning and improvement natural parts of your culture.
- O6c The institution has been continuously accredited by the North Central Association since 1968 and joined AQIP in 2005. Nursing, Massage Therapy, and Dental programs carry additional professional accreditations.
- O6d Students and staff have access to a suite of technology services know as e-Services which includes basic web access, email, electronic database access, and a full student services array, including advising, registration, payment, requesting transcripts, receiving grades, online library database access, and help desk.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness.

Item	S/O	Comment
7P1a	S	The College has identified a consistent set of measures for its core skills in general education, and uses the Perkins performance indicators to supplement program-specific skill assessment instruments, allowing the District to obtain broad measures of curricular effectiveness and student success.
7P1b	O	NWCCD's measures of student learning are aligned to clearly established outcomes. The alignment of measures of intended outcomes for other areas (e.g. accomplishing other distinctive objectives, improvement efforts, etc.) could inform the College's overall improvement process and better connect resource allocation to strategic initiatives.
7P2	O	While NWCCD has a number of processes for determining unit needs for data, most of these are informal, pending the outcome of the current strategic planning process. A more systematic process to determine the needs of departments and units could improve the College's ability to assess and improve institutional effectiveness.
7P3	O	NWCCD makes use of comparative data within the Wyoming community college system, and through participation in CCSSE and NCCBP. Identifying peers for benchmarking, particularly in neighboring states where workforce development activities contribute to labor market development strategies, could provide valuable information that furthers continuous improvement goals.
7P4a	S	NWCCD centralizes the management and dissemination of data through its Office of Institutional Research, and consistently communicates results through its website, making information available to its employees, stakeholders, and students.
7P4b	O	NWCCD realizes the need to systematically review and analyze data, set targets, and measure results.
7P5	O	The General Education and Vocational Assessment Programs help align unit-level data analysis with overall institution goals. To obtain consistent

results across the College, a clear set of consistent institution-level expectations or goals could be established. Analysis of data against those goals, then provides value to operational decisions.

- 7P6 S Several processes are in place to ensure the effectiveness and integrity of the information systems, such as the security authorization protocol and the policy that all users must complete FERPA training before being issued a user ID.
- 7P7 O NWCCD recognizes the advantages of creating systems to provide information for developing measures to assess effectiveness. Both the process of developing a culture of measurement, and the end product itself, present NWCCD with a transformative opportunity.
- 7R1 O NWCCD's Colleague users group is one of the primary sources of "soft data" regarding information, in the form of "feedback." An opportunity exists to use results to measure whether the system is helping the institution accomplish its mission and goals.
- 7R2 OO NWCCD has an opportunity to compare with organizations outside of the education community on particular systems and processes. Exposure to, and an understanding of how, routine institutional efficiency functions are accomplished elsewhere can accelerate the process of instructional/institutional improvement through the discovery and application of break-through innovations.
- 7I1a S NWCCD has undertaken a careful review of records and registration processes, and has made significant improvements, based on that review.
- 7I1b O The process developed and used to systematically review the Records and Registration procedures could be expanded to other areas within the District.
- 7I2 O With the implementation of One-stop, the new strategic planning process, and the internal governance project, there is a strong opportunity to

measure change and use this information to provide improvement feedback to strengthen the design of these projects over time.

AQIP CATEGORY 8: PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Planning Continuous Improvement examines your institution's planning processes and how your strategies and action plans are helping you achieve your mission and vision. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to institutional vision; planning; strategies and action plans; coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; measures; analysis of performance projections and results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1c Both campuses are impacted by the recent population and economic growth in the region and state. New facilities are presently needed in both locations and future expansion is anticipated at the Buffalo Outreach Center. The extremely low (3%) unemployment in the region provides opportunity for workforce training, but employment opportunities compete with the College for traditional enrollment students.
- O1d The "One-College" Initiative is designed to align the two campuses under a single philosophy, while allowing each to operate as separate facilities in both name and identity. Under new presidential leadership, the College is focusing on integrating and improving the campuses of the College, through improved systems of communication and by responding to student needs, as indicated by AQIP action projects.
- O1e As NWCCD enters the portfolio phase of the AQIP process, the organization sees itself at the very beginning of a transition to a continuous quality organization, and is managing rapid sweeping change. As a result, the present focus is on setting up new

systems to organize work, involve people meaningfully, and make planning and improvement natural parts of your culture.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
8P1	S	The process outlined in Figure 8P1.1 describes the annual planning cycle that includes input from six primary categories of stakeholders. The process provides opportunities for feedback at several times in the cycle which enhances understanding and encourages commitment to the plan.
8P2	O	The College has established five strategies to move it toward its vision, a targeted set of goals for the future. Linking these strategies against the current baseline would allow the College to better allocate resources and to measure its progress toward achieving its vision.
8P3	S	NWCCD has developed a comprehensive process to incorporate action projects into the life of the institution. The categorization of projects as Strategic Initiatives (SI), Key Foundation Initiatives (KFI), and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) appears to allow NWCCD to move forward on several areas of institutional priority simultaneously and to make sure that College efforts are reported to key stakeholders.
8P4	S	The College has taken the initial steps to bring broad involvement from multiple campuses and departments into planning and continuous improvement processes which are being aligned through the involvement of department managers.
8P5	O	Although NWCCD has done extensive planning, developing outcome measures would help determine if goals are being accomplished.

- 8P7 O A process that links employee training and professional development directly to institutional strategies and quality improvement could strongly support accomplishment of institution-wide, long-term goals.
- 8P8 O NWCCD has outlined some of the measures it plans to use in assessing effectiveness. Following through on these measures should provide results to be used in identifying improvement priorities.
- 8R1, 8R2 O Since NWCCD is at the beginning of the AQIP journey, action projects have been identified with planned and projected completion dates, but results from these projects are not included. Articulating measures of project success should provide results in the future to be used to measure success of strategies.
- 8I1, 8I2 S Hiring the new Vice-President for Institutional Effectiveness demonstrates a commitment to provide college-wide leadership that can support the improvements outlined.
- 8I1-8I3 O NWCCD has an informal process for improving current processes and it has outlined steps to take in the future that, when implemented, should help set targets for improvement. NWCCD would benefit from working with the Wyoming Community College System and the Higher Learning Commission to develop a list of peer institutions so that institutional benchmarking can be done.

AQIP CATEGORY 9: BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Building Collaborative Relationships examines your institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission. It examines your institution's processes and systems related to identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationship creation, prioritization, building; needs identification; internal relationships; measures; analysis of results; and efforts to continuously improve these areas.

Here are the Key Critical Characteristics of Northern Wyoming Community College District that were identified by the Systems Appraisal Team as most relevant for its interpretation of its *Systems Portfolio* section covering Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships:

Item Critical Characteristic

- O1a NWCCD is the local provider of higher education for all of Northeast Wyoming, serving an 11,000 square mile region (comprising three counties) from two campuses (separated by 100 miles) and a centrally located outreach center.
- O1b The College reflects the cultural differences between the two primary communities it serves. Sheridan College is highly respected for its arts and music programs which augment the community's cultural programs. The Gillette College campus serves a key role in the area because of its industry-related technical programs and its ITEC, funded by the US Department of Labor.
- O1c Both campuses are impacted by the recent population and economic growth in the region and state. New facilities are presently needed in both locations and future expansion is anticipated at the Buffalo Outreach Center. The extremely low (3%) unemployment in the region provides opportunity for workforce training, but employment opportunities compete with the College for traditional enrollment students.
- O2c NWCCD has partnerships with the University of Wyoming and six other institutions for baccalaureate degree completion on its campuses through a combination of online and onsite offerings.
- O4a NWCCD has numerous collaborative relationships with local, state, and national entities designed to provide stakeholders with appropriate services and opportunities.
- O8a Because of the region's population and economic growth, NWCCD has strong community and Legislative support, as evidenced by the funding of new construction on campus and a significant salary increase for all employees.

Here are what the Systems Appraisal Team identified as Northern Wyoming Community College District's most important strengths and opportunities for improvement relating to processes encompassed by Category 9, Building Collaborative Relationships.

<i>Item</i>	<i>S/O</i>	<i>Comment</i>
9P1	S	NWCCD employs numerous effective means of establishing and maintaining relationships with public and private education providers, area employers, local and state government agencies, and other partners, including a key on-campus relationship with the University of Wyoming.
9P2a	O	Structured processes to measure how effectively the College is meeting community or external partners' needs do not appear to be developed. These measures could provide new opportunities for growth and improvement.
9P2b	S	Many administrators, faculty, and staff actively participate in a wide array of local community organizations. This involvement provides a ready source of information from the community concerning local area needed.
9P3	SS	Despite being a multi-campus/multi-site institution, covering a large geographic region, NWCCD's "One-College" strategy serves to unite internal stakeholders and helps maintain a "small institution" culture.
9R1, 9R2a	SS	The growth, and the total assets, of the foundations for the College are very strong for a community college, and are valid indicators of the collaboration between the College and the community.
9R1, 9R2b	O	NWCCD has begun to collect baseline information. The first ITEC-Gillette survey, along with the comments of an outside grant reviewer, provides a primary baseline for assessing current collaborative relationships. Future iterations are necessary to gather true comparative information.